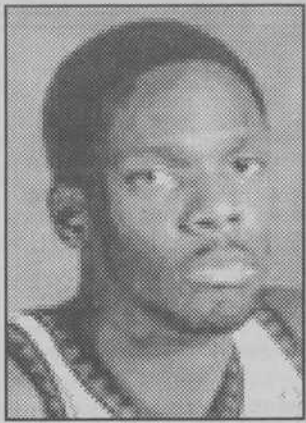


SPORTS

Suspect arrested in Sealy's death

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The State Patrol on Monday arrested the 43-year-old man believed responsible for the wrong-way crash that killed Minnesota Timberwolves swingman Malik Sealy.



MALIK SEALY

Investigators had until noon Wednesday to present the case to the Hennepin County Attorney's Office for formal charges against Souksangouane Phengsene, of Minneapolis, who remained under guard at Hennepin County Medical Center, where he's being treated for serious injuries.

Investigators said Phengsene was driving the wrong way on Highway 100 early Saturday morning when his pickup smashed into Sealy's sports utility truck in the Minneapolis suburb of St. Louis Park, fatally injuring the popular player who was returning from teammate Kevin Garnett's 24th birthday celebration. Blood-alcohol tests are under way.

The Timberwolves are planning to take their charter airplane to the funeral Friday on the campus of St. John's University, where Sealy starred before being drafted by the Indiana Pacers in 1992.

All the players except Rasha Nesterovic, who has returned to Slovenia, are expected to attend the service.

On Monday, Timberwolves coach Flip Saunders attended a memorial ceremony for mentor Bill

Musselman, who coached him at the University of Minnesota in the 1970s and served as the Wolves' first coach.

Saunders broke down as a prayer at that service was said for Sealy, who is survived by his newlywed wife, Lisa, and their 3-year-old son, Malik Remington.

"I had a tough time today," Saunders said. "But I think it's going to be that way for a while. It's going to be like that for our players for a while."

Sealy was coming off the best season of his eight-year NBA career. After the Wolves stumbled to a terrible start, Sealy cracked the starting lineup and sparked Minnesota to its best season ever.

"I hear people say we had a great year, 50 wins. But that doesn't matter. Because no matter what, this year will go down as a loss," Saunders said.

None of the players are

talking to the media yet, but Wolves vice president Kevin McHale said sadness had replaced shock throughout the organization.

"It's just a tremendous loss for his friends, his family, his wife, his son, teammates, college friends," McHale said. "One life touched so many different people."

Lisa Sealy released a statement saying the family was deeply moved by the sympathy of the Timberwolves, the NBA, friends and the public. She said the family was "thankful to know that Malik was loved by so many."

McHale said the team held no animosity for Phengsene, who will be booked into the Hennepin County Jail to await formal charges once he's released from the hospital.

"If being angry brought back Malik Sealy, I think we'd all be angry," McHale said. "But nothing anybody's going to do or say right now is going to change the events of 4 a.m. on May 20. That's written in stone."

Sealy was one of the more affable and intelligent players in pro sports. He had parts in commercials and movies and was a successful businessman. He played for the Pacers, Clippers and Pistons before finding a niche with the tight knit Wolves.

Saunders said that although Sealy was a free agent, he was certain the 30-year-old guard/forward was plan-

ning to stay in Minnesota. The grieving will take a long time because players are scattered for the summer and will revisit the tragedy when they report to camp, Saunders said.

Saunders and McHale are particularly concerned about their star, Garnett, who worshiped Sealy so much that he patterned his play after him and chose No. 21 in his honor. "The fortunate thing for Kevin is he had an opportunity to play with somebody he idolized growing up," Saunders said. "You don't always have that opportunity. Malik touched his life and instilled a lot of positive qualities in KG. So, yeah, we're concerned."

McHale said he'll draw on his experiences grieving the death of Boston Celtics teammate Reggie Lewis, who died of heart failure in 1993.

"As time goes by, you do remember the smiles and the laughter," McHale said. "You remember a lot of the positive things."

"I think the pain subsides and the memories stay forever."

Bryant confirms engagement

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif. (AP) - A Southern California high school is still abuzz with the news that one of its own students is engaged to Kobe Bryant, the 21-year-old Los Angeles Lakers star.

At the modest home in Huntington Beach where Bryant's 18-year-old fiancée Vanessa Laine lives with her grandparents, her grandfather sighed heavily as he confirmed the engagement. He also confirmed the rumor that his granddaughter would now be homeschooled instead of attending Marina High.

No, Bryant and Laine will not attend the June prom. Bryant reportedly gave his fiancée a 7-carat diamond ring.

Sandy Fredlund, manager of an Orange County Zales jewelry store said the stone is the size of a nickel, maybe even a quarter, and probably cost \$100,000.

"I was thinking about that ring all the way into work this morning," she said. "The largest thing I have in my store is a two-carat. And that's big. This is huge."

The couple met when Bryant, who likes rap and videos, stopped by a music video shoot where Laine was working as a background model, Marina High drama teacher Robert Rotenberry said Friday.

Laine is active in Marina's theater club but has no aspirations to be an actress. Rotenberry described her as "very pleasant, very nice, extra-outgoing."

She has completed advanced math classes and worked as a teacher's aide, running errands and taking roll call. She is an aspiring makeup artist and a periodic video model.

Bryant, who is in his fourth year with the Lakers after making the leap from high school directly to the NBA, recently signed a six-year contract extension reportedly worth \$70 million.

The contract will take him through the 2004-05 season, when he will be 26. She will be 23.

Thomas honored by mayors conference

PHOENIX (Special to the NNPA) — NBA legend Isaiah Thomas, chairman and CEO of the Continental Basketball Association, was presented with the President's Award by the National Conference of Black Mayors, Inc. at the organization's annual convention, held last month in Dallas, Texas.

Thomas was acknowledged for his contributions to the community and setting a positive example as a young Black entrepreneur.

"We are pleased and very proud to present Isaiah Thomas with the NCBM's 2000 President's Award for his tireless work on behalf of minority communities throughout the United States," commented association President Jesse M. Norwood, the mayor of Prichard, Ala.

"Isaiah and the CBA have been instrumental in improving the lives of the League's players and the communities where the League has teams,"

Norwood added. "His strong commitment to outreach and education programs at the grassroots level is commendable and hereby recognized."

Thomas responded: "I am honored to receive the National Conference of Black Mayors' President's Award this year. I see the CBA as a positive force that creates and nurtures opportunity and provides a framework of success for individuals and our communities.

"I am privileged to be associated with many members

of the NCBM through partnerships involving communities, education and the CBA," he continued. "I look forward to strengthening these relationships and creating new ones far into the future."

The National Conference of Black Mayors, Inc. is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, service organization which provides management and technical assistance to Black mayors and articulates the membership's concerns on national policy issues.

Boxing reform

(Continued from Page 1)

take up the measure before that congressional term ended.

The bill's most visible targets are super-promoters Don King and Bob Arum, both of whom declined invitations to appear at hearings on Capitol Hill. Several fighters testified in favor of the measure, and Ali also attended a hearing to offer his support.

McCain, Bryan and Oxley were also behind the Professional Boxing Safety Act of 1996, which introduced modest health standards for the sport.

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